

What is claimed is:

[Claim 1] 1. A method for electronically signing an electronic transcript, comprising:

obtaining an electronic transcript;
obtaining signature location information including at least one of a page number and a line number within the transcript where a signature image is to appear;
incorporating said signature image into the electronic transcript;
associating said signature image with said signature location information;
performing a modification detection operation on the electronic transcript to generate a representation of the contents of the electronic transcript;
providing for the recording and time stamping by a digital notary service of the representation of the contents of the electronic transcript;
obtaining a notary record from the digital notary service of the time stamping;
digitally signing the notary record; and
forming an electronically signed electronic transcript by bundling the digitally signed notary record with the electronic transcript.

[Claim 2] 2. The method of claim 1, wherein said performing a modification detection operation comprises:

performing a first hash operation on the electronic transcript to generate a representation of the contents of the electronic transcript;
concatenating data to the representation of the contents of the electronic transcript, said data identifying a user; and
performing a second hash operation on the data concatenated to the representation, the second hash operation generating a representation of the contents of the electronic transcript and the data.

[Claim 3] 3. The method of claim 2, wherein said first and second hash operations comprise a RIPEMD-160 hash operation.

[Claim 4] 4. The method of claim 3, wherein said data includes a user name uniquely identifying the user.

[Claim 5] 5. The method of claim 3, wherein said data includes a unique identifier which uniquely identifies the transcript.

[Claim 6] 6. The method of claim 1, wherein said signature image is obtained by scanning a signature into an image file.

[Claim 7] 7. The method of claim 1, wherein said associating step comprises: incorporating said signature image into said electronic transcript at the location indicated by said signature location information.

[Claim 8] 8. The method of claim 1, wherein said associating step comprises: incorporating said signature image data into said electronic transcript at the end of the electronic transcript; and incorporating a pointer into said electronic transcript at the location indicated by said signature location information.

[Claim 9] 9. The method of claim 1, wherein said incorporating step comprises concatenating said signature image data to said electronic transcript and said associating step comprises concatenating said location information to said electronic transcript.

[Claim 10] 10. A method for electronically signing an electronic transcript, comprising:

receiving a signature document having a signature thereon from a user;
scanning said signature into a signature image file;
receiving an electronic transcript;
receiving signature location information including at least one of a page number and a line number within the electronic transcript where a signature image is to appear when the electronic transcript is displayed on a viewer;
incorporating the electronic transcript, signature image file and signature location information into an electronic transcript file;
performing a hash operation on the electronic transcript file to generate a representation of the contents of the electronic transcript file;
providing for the recording and time stamping by a digital notary service of the representation of the contents of the electronic transcript file;
obtaining a notary record from the digital notary service of the time stamping;
digitally signing the notary record; and
forming an electronically signed electronic transcript by bundling the digitally signed notary record with the electronic transcript file.

[Claim 11] 11. The method of claim 10, wherein the hash operation is a RIPEMD-160 hash operation.

[Claim 12] 12. The method of claim 10, wherein said performing a hash operation comprises:

performing a first hash operation on said electronic transcript file to generate a representation of the contents of the electronic transcript file;
concatenating data to the representation of the contents of the electronic transcript file, said data identifying a user; and
performing a second hash operation on the data and the representation, the second hash operation generating a representation of the contents of the electronic transcript file and the data.

[Claim 13] 13. The method of claim 12, wherein said data includes a user name uniquely identifying the user.

[Claim 14] 14. The method of claim 12, wherein said data includes a recipient's name.

[Claim 15] 15. The method of claim 12, wherein said data includes a unique identifier which uniquely identifies the transcript.

[Claim 16] 16. The method of claim 10, wherein a viewer, when displaying the electronic transcript, is operable display the signature image at the signature image location.

[Claim 17] 17. A computer program product comprising:

a computer useable medium and computer readable code embodied on said computer useable medium for causing electronically signing an electronic transcript by a user, the computer readable code comprising:
computer readable program code devices configured to cause the computer to effect the receiving of an electronic transcript;
computer readable program code devices configured to cause the computer to effect the receiving of signature location information including at least one of a page number and a line number within the electronic transcript where a signature is to appear;
computer readable program code devices configured to cause the computer to effect the incorporating the electronic transcript, a signature image file and signature location information into an electronic transcript file;

computer readable program code devices configured to cause the computer to effect the performing a hash operation on the electronic transcript file to generate a representation of the contents of the electronic transcript file;
computer readable program code devices configured to cause the computer to effect the providing for the recording and time stamping by a digital notary service of the representation of the contents of the electronic transcript file;
computer readable program code devices configured to cause the computer to effect the obtaining a notary record from the digital notary service of the time stamping;
computer readable program code devices configured to cause the computer to effect the digitally signing the notary record; and
computer readable program code devices configured to cause the computer to effect the forming an electronically signed electronic transcript by bundling the digitally signed notary record with the electronic transcript file.

[Claim 18] 18. The computer program product of claim 17, wherein the computer readable program code devices configured to cause the computer to effect the performing a hash operation comprise:

computer readable program code devices configured to cause the computer to effect the performing a first hash operation on said electronic transcript file to generate a representation of the contents of the electronic transcript file;
computer readable program code devices configured to cause the computer to effect the concatenating data to the representation of the contents of the electronic transcript file, said data identifying the user; and
computer readable program code devices configured to cause the computer to effect the performing a second hash operation on the data concatenated to the representation, the second hash operation generating a representation of the contents of the electronic transcript file and the data.

[Claim 19] 19. An electronically signed electronic transcript comprising an electronic transcript file, and a digitally signed notary record, said signed electronic transcript obtained by:

receiving an electronic transcript;
receiving signature location information including at least one of a page number and a line number within the electronic transcript where a signature image is to appear when the electronic transcript is displayed on a viewer;
incorporating the electronic transcript, a signature image file and the signature location information into the electronic transcript file;
performing a hash operation on the electronic transcript file to generate a representation of the contents of the electronic transcript file;
providing for the recording and time stamping by a digital notary service of the representation of the contents of the electronic transcript file;

obtaining a notary record from the digital notary service of the time stamping;
digitally signing the notary record; and
forming the electronically signed electronic transcript by bundling the digitally signed notary record with the electronic transcript file.

[Claim 20] 20. The electronically signed electronic transcript of claim 19, wherein said step of performing a hash operation comprises:

performing a first hash operation on said electronic transcript file to generate a representation of the contents of the electronic transcript file;
concatenating data to the representation of the contents of the electronic transcript file, said data identifying a user; and
performing a second hash operation on the data and the representation, the second hash operation generating a representation of the contents of the electronic transcript file and the data.

[Claim 21] 21. The method of claim 1, wherein said signature image is obtained by scanning a notarize copy of a signature.